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REPORT ON CONDITIONS IN POLISH CITY OF SZCZECIN

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Stettin [Szczecin] must deny its century-old German past. The Poles have eliminated all evidence of German history.

Nobody speaks any longer of the project of turning the important commercial port into a Soviet naval base. The Poles are still the sole administrators of the city, although the Soviets enjoy special privileges in the port area. The former Vulkan shipyard is surrounded by barbed wire and strictly guarded by Soviet soldiers. At night, searchlights play on the barbed-wire fence. The shipyard is building minesweepers, PT boats, torpedo boats, and submarines. In addition, there is a large-scale repair program for units of the Soviet Baltic Fleet. No employee or worker of the shipyard is permitted to quit his job. There are no fixed working hours and work frequently has to continue all night in order to fulfill the quota. The Polish secret police has a special department for surveillance of the shipyard personnel, but the work put out by the shipyard is inferior. Many accidents and damage to machinery are matters of daily routine.

The port area is constantly being expanded. A new railroad station for coal trains from Upper Silesia has been built on the right bank of the Oder. The foundations of the station are located on a former swamp which has been filled with 160,000 railroad carloads of earth and sand.

Most of the Old City no longer exists. After the debris had been cleared, party and administration buildings were erected there. During the day, the town gives the impression of being a busy place, but at night it is dead. Only the port area has some night life.

Prices are high. A worker who makes good wages still needs 3 months' pay to buy a suit. The stores in the main streets cannot fill the demand. The black market is flourishing. Liquor, US cigarettes, gold, silver, and foreign currency, including West German marks, are offered everywhere in the city. People form long queues in front of "rental shops" where household and consumer articles not available on the free market or out of reach for people with average income can be rented for a fixed fee.

Social misery and oppression burden the city. The carrying of cameras is strictly prohibited. People whisper of the "Kaschubische Strasse" [ulica Kaszubska], the street where the secret police has set up its main office in a large new building. The building is surrounded by Soviet T-34 tanks.

The people have become apathetic under the constant pressure, but religion has kept its hold and it is stirring to see how fervently they pray during Sunday services.

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